Marvel Television Presents

A Kevin Feige Production

PRODUCTION NOTES

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KEY INFORMATION AND CREDITS

Directed by: Destin Daniel Cretton (101, 102); James Ponsoldt (103, 104), Tiffany Johnson (105, 106); Stella Meghie (107, 108)
Written by: Andrew Guest (101, 102, 108); Paul Welsh & Madeline Walter (103); Zeke Nicholson (104); Anayat Fakhraie (105); Roja Gashtili & Julia Lerman and Andrew Guest (106); Kira Talise and Andrew Guest (107)
Created for Television by: Destin Daniel Cretton and Andrew Guest
Based on the Marvel Comics
Executive Producers: Kevin Feige, Stephen Broussard, Jonathan Schwartz, Louis D'Esposito, Brad Winderbaum, Destin Daniel Cretton, Andrew Guest

Co-Executive Producers: Brian Gay, Jennifer L. Booth, Trevor Waterson
Produced by: Bonnie Muñoz
Director of Photography: Brett Pawlak (101, 102, 105, 106); Armando Salas, ASC (103, 104, 107, 108)
Production Designers: Cindy Chao, Michele Yu
Edited by: Gina Sansom (101, 102, 106); Nena Erb, ACE (103, 104, 107, 108); Gina Sansom, Cassie Dixon (105)
Music by: Joel P West
Costume Designer: Joy Cretton
Visual Effects Supervisor: John Haley
Visual Effects Producer: Jason Ramsey
Music Supervisors: Dave Jordan, Justine von Winterfeldt
Casting by: Carmen Cuba

Cast: Yahya Abdul-Mateen II (Simon Williams), X Mayo (Janelle Jackson), Zlatko Burić (Von Kovak), Arian Moayed (Agent Cleary), Shola Adewusi (Martha), Demetrius Grosse (Eric), Bechir Sylvain (Sanford), Kameron J. Meadows (Young Simon), Olivia Thirlby (Vivian), Byron Bowers (DeMarr "Doorman" Davis), Joe Pantoliano (as Himself), Special Guest Star Josh Gad (as Himself), and Ben Kingsley (Trevor Slattery)

SYNOPSIS

Aspiring Hollywood actor Simon Williams is struggling to get his career off the ground. During a chance meeting with Trevor Slattery, an actor whose biggest roles may be well behind him, Simon learns that legendary director Von Kovak is remaking the superhero film "Wonder Man." These two actors at opposite ends of their careers doggedly pursue life-changing roles in this film as audiences get a peek behind the curtain of the entertainment industry.

SPOILER DISCLAIMER

The following notes contain mild spoilers for the series. We kindly ask that you refrain from publishing any details in your coverage that may spoil the viewing experience for audiences.

A Q&A WITH ANDREW GUEST

Co-Creator and Head Writer

What inspired the series? How did it come about, and were you involved from the start?
This is an interesting project in that it didn't involve a traditional start for Marvel in general. Back when Destin Daniel Cretton was shooting "Shang-Chi," he had loved working with Ben Kingsley so much that he turned to his producer on that film, Jonathan Schwartz, and said they should do a series where Ben's character, Trevor Slattery, goes to Hollywood. They both got excited about the idea but learned that internally Marvel was already planning on doing "Wonder Man," another project that was about Hollywood. So, initially, Destin was told that he couldn't do it, but eventually everyone began to realize that maybe this could be the same show. And that's when they started reaching out to writers.

When I met with Destin, Jonathan, Stephen Broussaurd and Brian Gay, they told me they wanted a show that felt different. They wanted it to be a comedy about Hollywood and they wanted it to be about Trevor and Wonder Man, but they weren't sure who or what this Wonder Man character was going to be—does he have superpowers already? Does he get them in the show? What's his relationship to those powers? What's his relationship to acting?

Unlike when I worked on "Hawkeye," where I was sent source material, in that case a run of Matt Fraction comics, I didn't really get anything on this one. The comic book character of "Wonder Man" has a pretty complicated backstory and has existed in a lot of different iterations throughout the years. They weren't sure they wanted to stay true to any of those versions necessarily. Which was really great and freeing for me. So, the question of "Who is Wonder Man?" was wide open.

Does the series tie into the greater Marvel Cinematic Universe in any way?
We very much wanted to do a no-homework show. It does tie into the larger MCU in that Trevor exists in previous movies like "Shang-Chi" and "Iron Man 3," and anything's on the table in terms of greater connectivity down the road, but you don't have to have seen every Marvel movie or series to enjoy this show.

How did you eventually crack Simon Williams/Wonder Man?
The central questions to me were: how does Simon feel about having super powers? And if we're really going to tell stories about acting in Hollywood, are these powers helping or hurting Simon's in his desire to be a success? At first blush, it may seem like having super powers would get you a lot of attention. Make you famous. That would be great, right? But I had been reading various profiles of incredibly talented actors and learning about their processes, and I loved the idea that if you gave any of Hollywood's most serious actors superpowers, they probably wouldn't be that thrilled. How are superpowers going to help you if your dream is to be Daniel Day-Lewis? Once I figured that out, I knew who Simon was. We already knew who Trevor was, so then it was just about figuring out why these two characters are together. We needed some conflict, and we needed to know what the stakes were. That's when I got really got excited about telling a story about what it's like to break through in Hollywood—

how difficult it is, how it's not an overnight thing. I wanted Simon to be a working actor and the stakes of the series to be: will he finally get his big break?

What were some of the north stars you and your writers referred to as you were writing these characters and mapping out their story?
One of the things I wanted to do, and that Marvel was very much on board with, was to create an incredibly grounded world where Simon Williams is superpowered but everything else in the series should essentially feel like the world we all know. To me, that makes his superpowers feel all the more exciting and special when we see them. Our core philosophy was: For an audience to fall in love with and care about these characters, we need to believe in them. You need to believe that they are real. So we needed to know Simon's backstory. Where is he from? What's his family like and where were they from? And asking those questions, and answering them, made him and Trevor all the richer.

You mentioned that this is a comedic story about Hollywood, but the show is, of course, more multilayered than that. Can you describe the tone of the series?
Initially, we were thinking it was going to be a little bit more comedic than it ended up being. I come from a comedy background where I worked on shows like "30 Rock" and "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" and "Community," and there's a certain rhythm and cadence to that kind of show which I love, and thought might work, but that tone sort evolved as I started working with Yahya and Ben Kingsley. So, we had to find the tone together. I would still call this show a comedy, but with a lot of heart.

The dynamic between Yahya and Ben was incredibly fun to watch. Was the rapport between the actors there from the start or, much like the arc of their characters, was it something that needed to be nurtured over time?
It was incredible to watch these two actors get to know each other, especially because Ben was already a part of this project before we found our Wonder Man. When we were thinking about who could play Simon Williams, it was important for us to find someone who'd be able to stand toe to toe with Ben. When you gave him a monologue for an audition, and you wanted the audience to believe he totally nailed it, you needed an actor who could pull that off. And that was Yahya. He's incredible. And Ben isn't someone who gives his friendship away easily. You have to earn his trust. So, when he first met Yahya, he needed to see how seriously Yahya took the work. It didn't take long. In time, the connection between the two of them really did form. And seeing them together now is so wonderful.

In casting the role of Simon Williams/Wonder Man, what qualities were you looking for in an actor, knowing that whoever was cast would have to go toe to toe with Ben Kingsley?
Well, when I first wrote the outline for the series, I knew that this was kind of a love story about two narcissists who learn how to care about another person, which is a baby step for both. So, in casting Simon, I wanted someone who could pull off playing a charming narcissist, essentially. That's where we started—that part was always on the page—but once Yahya was in and started asking questions about Simon's background and upbringing and we started answering them, we started putting flesh to bone. We made some important choices, like Simon being a second-generation Haitian American, figuring out

where his love for acting came from, and other little things we zeroed in on thanks to Yahya's curiosity and desire for specificity.

Trevor Slattery was an existing character within the MCU, having previously appeared in "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" and "Iron Man 3," and we get to see so many more facets to him in "Wonder Man." In what ways did you seek to build this character out? Did Ben contribute?
He did! One of the most wonderful things about this process for me was meeting Ben and pitching him this show, it was incredibly intimidating but also so valuable because Ben has known and lived with this character for years. So he was a wellspring of information on Trevor that was so very helpful. Early on when we asked him, "What's Trevor's backstory? What's he like?" he told us about Trevor's mother, who he imagined was a nurse who scrimped and saved and always supported her son. So, of course we put that in the show.

But the most incredible thing is that Ben knew intrinsically what acting means to his character, how significant it is to Trevor. Ben is passionate about the role of actors in our society and what it means to have somebody whose job it is to try to understand ourselves as humans. There's a line in the pilot that came out of my conversations with Ben, Trevor's talking about being lost on how to play "Lear" until he remembers a speech from "Hamlet" about how the purpose of the play is to "hold a mirror up to nature." That was a story Ben told me about himself. And I just got to use it for Trevor. And there's no one better to perform those lines than someone who already believes them.

Tell us about the process of bringing Von Kovak to life. Who inspired this character and what made Zlatko Burić the perfect actor for the role?
Initially, we thought of getting a famous director to play themself for that role. But then the role grew to a point where it wasn't just a few lines anymore, so we needed a performer who could embody this persona that's part Werner Herzog, part Krzysztof Kieślowski, part Paul Thomas Anderson and Christopher Nolan—he's a melting pot of great directors in one. In casting the role, both Destin and I loved "Triangle of Sadness," which came out about a year before we started our writers' room, and we both loved Zlatko and what he did with his character in that film. He immediately became our first choice for Von Kovak, and he was so game for the role. He loved playing Von Kovak and had so much fun. I think the hardest part for him was when he had to be harsh and mean to Simon, because Zlatko really liked Simon and wanted him to succeed.

The series feels like a love letter to Los Angeles. How did you go about choosing the locations?
From the outset, the idea was to show the side of this sprawling metropolis with different areas that don't necessarily get explored. So, when we talked about where Trevor Slattery would live, we talked about it being one of those old buildings that were built in the late '20s, like the El Royale, that had all this character in a part of town that feels a bit run down these days. And we actually used the exteriors of The Talmadge which is another great example of one of these buildings.

Our production designers, Cindy Chao and Michele Yu, are both L.A. natives, and in their initial presentation they were so excited to talk about all these parts of L.A. that they know and have lived in their whole lives. They showed pictures of Thai Elvis and the House of Davids in Hancock Park, which is no longer there, but people who lived here 10 years ago would know. It was the little things that are hyper-specific that got us excited, and it was so much fun to put them on the screen.

What are your hopes for the series and what effect do you hope it'll have on the MCU going forward?
I hope people connect with these characters and connect with the show. I got a text from Joe Pantoliano the other day after he saw it for the first time, and he loved it so much and was so proud of it. That's one of the things I hope for the series—that the people who put so much time and energy into it are proud of what we've done. And I hope it encourages Marvel to take more risks like this. They had our backs and knew it was a gamble. I hope it pays off for them.

A Q&A WITH DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON

Co-Creator/Director

"Wonder Man" is unlike anything Marvel has done before. What do you think makes this series so unique, especially in the context of what we've seen thus far in the MCU?
The first time I heard Andrew Guest's pitch for "Wonder Man," it sounded like a show I've never seen before…not just in the MCU, but anywhere. It's hilarious, smart, weird, full of heart, and at its core, a comedy about two lonely narcissists learning how to be friends. Yes, it's a satire about the entertainment industry. Yes, it pokes fun at the genre of superhero films. But it's also a celebration of Los Angeles, the city of dreamers, as we follow two infectious characters who are passionately, maybe obsessively, driven for greatness.

"Wonder Man" may have originated as a Marvel comic, but the story you and your collaborators have created is entirely fresh. What inspired the story and why did you want to set it in Hollywood?
I had the pleasure of directing Sir Ben Kingsley in "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings." I just loved working with him and fell in love with his portrayal of Trevor Slattery, a washed-up actor who somehow stumbled into the world of superheroes. On the set of "Shang-Chi," I told our producer, Jonathan Schwartz, how much I would love to see Trevor venture back to Hollywood and confront whatever it is he's been running from. Jonathan had our art department make a poster with the title "Trevor Goes to Hollywood," and we never stopped talking about it. Eventually, the idea would merge with another character from the comics who is an actor in Hollywood, Simon Williams.

What made you want to expand upon both of these characters' stories?
Like in the Marvel comics, Simon Williams is an actor, who happens to have super powers. In our series, he'd rather not have super powers because it only gets in the way of him becoming the best actor he can be. He takes his acting seriously, probably a little too seriously. He's a meticulous, specific, over-

thinker whose analytical brain often gets in the way of achieving his dream. Trevor Slattery couldn't be more different… all instinct, no thought. Trevor helps Simon get out of his head long enough to really feel. And when he does, it brings up some emotions from his past that he hasn't fully dealt with… which, in Simon's case, can be quite explosive.

Can you briefly describe Simon Williams? Who is he and what is he like? What qualities were you looking for in an actor to portray this character and why was Yahya Abdul-Mateen II perfect for the role?

Yahya Abdul-Mateen II is an incredible actor who quickly understood how to capture the layers of Simon. Simon can come across as a weird dude (in the best way) who sometimes seems to be trying to understand the right way to act (both on screen and in life). And I find it endlessly entertaining and moving to watch how Yahya takes this insular, isolated character on a journey towards opening up to the people around him, allowing himself to be honest and vulnerable for the first time. Watching the chemistry between Yahya and Sir Ben on screen is such a joy.

How would you describe the series? It's a tricky one to categorize.

Andrew Guest and his incredible team of writers gave us a series that feels so refreshing and singular in all the best ways. The scripts were so easy to direct because the tone was so clear and specific. I actually think it's pretty easy to describe—"Wonder Man" is a bromantic-action-fantasy-comedy-drama that will make you laugh and cry and cringe and feel like you can fly.

There's a lovely indie quality infused throughout the series. As director of the first two episodes, what tone were you aiming to establish at the outset?

We wanted to make a series that really shows what it feels like to live and work in this city, not only the glamour of a red carpet, but also the reality of living in a one-bedroom apartment on Lexington Ave. I was lucky to be able to work with my good friend/DP, Brett Pawlak, to create a look that felt both beautiful and grounded, and is truly crafted around the performances of our incredible actors.

"Wonder Man" serves as a love letter to Los Angeles and showcases parts of the city that viewers around the world don't normally get to see. What can you tell me about the intent that went into the locations?

Doing this series made me fall in love with Los Angeles all over again. Thanks to our incredible production designers, Cindy Chao and Michele Yu, we were able to explore so many iconic spots throughout Los Angeles. Cindy and Michele were insistent on showcasing locations throughout the city that feel like the real LA that they grew up in. So, Simon and Trevor weren't only going to TCL Chinese Theatre and the Hollywood Walk of Fame, they were also having drinks at Taix in Echo Park, lunch at Clark Street Diner, and watching a matinee at the now-closed Highland Park Theater.

What impact do you hope the series has on the larger Marvel Cinematic Universe and on viewers in general?

Whether you're a long-time Marvel fan or have never watched anything in the MCU before, I hope people have as much fun hanging out with Simon and Trevor as we do. The series was made with love

and laughter by a whole bunch of LA-based storytellers, and I can't wait for the world to see their work. It's a total blast in more ways than one.

A Q&A WITH YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II

(Simon Williams)

Simon Williams is an aspiring actor looking for his big break. While talented and ambitious, his inability to get out of his own head is keeping him from stardom. When the role of a lifetime comes along, he does everything he can to earn his spot on screen while keeping his superpowers hidden.

What attracted you to this project initially?

I've always really enjoyed how Marvel allows its characters to be personalities. They drink, they have problems, relationships, fights, they have tangible needs, wants and desires. So, when I got a call from Destin Daniel Cretton telling me he had an opportunity for me, it really got my attention. I'm a big fan of his films, especially "Just Mercy" and "Short Term 12," and Destin said he wanted to do something similar in terms of the style. And he presented this character, Simon Williams, as an up-and-coming actor and a dreamer who happens to have superpowers but is really just trying to focus on his craft. Simon felt familiar to me despite how weird he is, and I said yes immediately. As an actor I knew what Simon's journey was like and I stepped into the role with enthusiasm.

What drew you to your character? What's he like?

I think there are going to be plenty of people who see Simon and say, "Hey, I recognize this guy, I recognize those moments, I see myself in him." Simon is both insecure and overconfident. He's ambitious and into himself but has trouble making friends. He's flawed but has a big heart. He's deeply human.

Simon has secrets. He has these powers he can't talk about, so trust is very important to him and I imagine he's trying to find different ways to say something, because he can't necessarily say exactly what it is that he's dealing with. So, that energy gets bottled up and misdirected to other places. It makes sense to me that he's someone who's ambitious and passionate but isn't the best at making friends or maintaining his relationships. Which is what makes his friendship with Trevor so amazing. They're different, but the same. They can talk about acting.

What do you think draws them to each other, aside from their love of acting?

Trevor is lost. And Simon is too, so I think he sees that in Trevor, and it makes Trevor not as dangerous as everyone else believes. With Trevor, Simon can practice empathy and listening, but he can also practice leadership. Trevor doesn't judge him, and so he becomes a safe place for Simon to try to learn the rules of socializing and friendship.

What was it like working with Ben Kingsley?

It was great working with Ben. We got to help create these two characters who are passionate about acting and theater. There's a lot of people out there striving to be in this business right now—the ones who have three or four lines and are staying up with their partners or friends going back and forth and rehearsing. Ben and I felt protective of the Simons and the Trevors in the community. We have a great mutual respect as actors. I remember he said to me early on that the time between "action" and "cut" is for the actors. Everything outside of those two words belongs to the crew and everyone else responsible for creating the show, but the time between when the director says "action" and "cut" is for us.

Can you talk about Simon's dynamic with Janelle and what X Mayo brings to the role?
Janelle is Simon's agent, and in some ways she's one of the only people who can tell Simon the truth. Simon can play up his innocence, but Janelle isn't going to buy it. She'll shake him off and say, "Nah, I see you. Get it together." She's not afraid to say the difficult thing, and it's important to have people like that. She's big sis. And X is awesome. She's got a theater and improv/sketch-comedy background, so you've got to be on your toes when you're playing opposite her because she's going to bring something fresh on every take. She improvised a lot, and a lot of what she said worked its way into the story and made it better.

What was it like working with Zlatko Burić?
Zlatko's so talented. I was excited when I saw that he was in the cast. You don't have to do much when you're opposite actors like him—you just put your feet in the ground, look them in the eye and talk, listen, and respond. He brought something truly amazing to this show.

How was it working with your directing team on this series?
The directors played such important roles in bringing something different but also very particular to each of their episodes. Destin Daniel Cretton was the architect who established the tone and set us off on the right foot. With James Ponsoldt, Simon had to go back home to see his family, so there was a softer sensibility there. The next couple of episodes get crazy, and that's where Tiffany Johnson came in with her great energy. And then to bring it home, we needed a combination of all of those things and that's where Stella Meghie came in with her strengths to really help us round it off and bring all the heart, humor, action and grit together. Everyone played their instrument extremely well.

"Wonder Man" is a story about trying to make it in the movie business. Was it fun lampooning Hollywood?
There are two parts to that: I get to enjoy playing out the earnest journey Simon goes through, but then I also get to enjoy stepping back and laughing at it all from the perspective of someone with the wisdom to know that if you ever get that shot you've been dreaming of…just say the lines! [*Laughs.*] Get in and get out, you know what I mean?

How important was it to shoot this series in and around Los Angeles?
I'm based in New York, so it was cool for me to get to know L.A., driving around the different neighborhoods. We're making this for the city, for the industry, for the people who work at craft services or the cats walking down Hollywood Boulevard taking pictures of the stars on the Walk of Fame.

If you're in L.A., you'll be able to find yourself somewhere in this story. You may be like Simon or Trevor, smack dead-center in it, or you're the one pointing the camera, but everyone's here and represented, so it only makes sense that we film in L.A.

What has this experience meant to you and what have you enjoyed about it?
I really enjoyed being able to act in this way again. The job I did before this was a Broadway play, and before that I was taking time off because I was waiting for something that I cared about to come along. I really enjoyed working with Destin, Ben and the rest of the team—I've got to give a big shoutout to Andrew Guest, who was my comrade throughout the process and made sure that the story we were telling was tight. It's nice to work on something that you care about. And it's also really dope to do something that you care about that happens to be a part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

What about this show do you think will excite fans?
I think they're going to connect to the characters and the themes of trying to make it, trying to dig deep to see what you're made of. I think viewers are also going to like the way we shot the series. This show looks really different from anything Marvel has done before, and I'm proud to be a part of that. I like being a part of something that sparks conversation and curiosity. There's more than one way to make a Marvel show and this was a lot of fun.

A Q&A WITH BEN KINGSLEY

(Trevor Slattery)

Trevor Slattery, a veteran actor whose biggest roles are behind him, returns to Los Angeles for another shot at the silver screen. Haunted by his most famous role as the terrorist known as the Mandarin, Trevor works hard to recraft his own Hollywood narrative.

Can you give us a little recap of your history with Trevor Slattery? When you first signed up to play him in "Iron Man 3," did you envision you'd still be playing this character 13 years later?
When Kevin Feige first came to my house in Oxfordshire to tell me about this idea that the Mandarin is actually a British actor named Trevor Slattery, he explained it to me in such a way that it was absolutely compelling. I very much liked the idea of a two-tiered performance. And because of my roots in the theater, I was used to developing a character over months, sometimes even years, in certain Shakespearean plays, and it was a nice resonance that Trevor is also a lover of Shakespeare, so there's a nice parallel there.

"Iron Man 3" allowed Trevor to flourish through Drew Pearce's wonderful script, Shane Black's direction and the generosity of Robert Downey Jr., and I was thrilled when I watched it with an audience for the first time and people were apoplectic with laughter at Trevor. They loved him! So, Drew Pearce then directed the short film "All Hail the King," and then the incredible Destin Daniel Cretton put forward the idea of having Trevor reappear in "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings." And now Trevor's life in TV has evolved again with Kevin, the producers and the wonderful writer Andrew Guest. Trevor is the

same Trevor he was 12 years ago, apart from the simple fact that he's now sober. It's been a privilege to inhabit this character for so long.

What drew you to the idea of revisiting this character in "Wonder Man"?
It was my complete trust in Destin, knowing that he understood the different layers to this character. Trevor isn't a slapstick comedian–he has vulnerability and aspirations. He's proud of the fact that he's no longer under the influence of drugs or alcohol. He has a history, and all these layers were there in the wonderful writing by Andrew Guest and his team.

Where do we find Trevor at the outset of the series?
Thanks to the gang in "Shang-Chi," we open the series with Trevor sprung from prison and back in L.A. hoping to finally prove that his mother's faith in him is justified. So, we find him trying to make his mark in Hollywood as an actor, full of hope, ambition, excitement, cherishing his past and devoted to the memory of his mother, who encouraged him to be an Act-Tor.

What was it like working with Yahya Abdul-Mateen II and what did you enjoy about your collaboration with him throughout this series?
I found as the series went on and as he grew into his character and I into mine, that he is not averse to taking risks whereas my biggest curse is perhaps I can be too careful as an actor. We coined certain phrases, key words and gestures, which I won't share 'cause they're confidential language between actors, that would lock us into the tone of a scene, and as we worked together it became a very delightful shorthand between us. The most important thing between actors is trust, and the ability or the will to make the other guy look good is far more important than competing. There's enough competition in our lives without competing with each other when we're on camera. We supported each other, and that was a very gratifying layer to unearth working with Yahya.

What was it like reuniting with your "Shang-Chi" director, Destin Daniel Cretton, and what do you enjoy most about working with him?
Destin is gifted with something I hold very precious. With some directors, you always have a sneaking feeling that you're still auditioning for the part and you're being judged every day. Destin has the ability to give you the role, make you custodian of it, and he films what is there in front of him. He's the type of director who'll get on set, see what the day offers, and then shape that into what he wants. He's not the type who's constantly interrupting your brush strokes. Destin gave me the role and completely trusted me in being custodian of Trevor.

What have you enjoyed most about this experience?
For an actor to play an actor is already a huge responsibility in a way, because there are so many preconceptions and a great deal of nonsense that leads to derision towards actors. But for Yahya and I, and the wonderful creators of this story, we had an opportunity to build a new way of telling actors' stories that can heal and enhance, and that for me personally the opportunity to embody an actor with a degree of respect and affection was very gratifying.

A Q&A WITH ZLATKO BURIĆ

(Von Kovak)

The darling of the independent film world, Von Kovak is an eccentric and legendary Oscar®-winning director whose latest undertaking—a remake of the cult superhero classic "Wonder Man"—becomes the talk of the town.

What attracted you to this role?
From the beginning I was enthusiastic because the lines were funny and they had different levels of humor. I got the impression Von Kovak was an eccentric European auteur. Shooting a film is a little bit different in Europe. It's not like an industry (or they pretend it's not), it's more like an artistic statement; which is something that can be good but can also be comedic. So, for me, when I started to build my story about Von Kovak, I imagined him like a person who is a little eccentric at a press conference and tries to build a big background for what is a simple action story.

What was it like working with Yahya Abdul-Mateen II and Ben Kingsley?
Yahya is a warm person. Making films in Europe is a little bit different, so it's strange when you come on set and it's the first day. Yahya's support for me from the first moment was great. And Ben, it felt like we'd known each other for a long time. I always think about acting in terms of music. I love improvising, and I think when people start to swing together to get the group somewhere it's a great thing.

What did you think about filming in Von Kovak's mansion?
I heard about this house from the beginning, but when I saw it for the first time, I said, "Wow, the house really is the essence and spirit of Hollywood–everything you love and detest. Location is so important; it helps a lot when you are acting.

What did you enjoy most about working on this show?
Absolutely the group. I felt very comfortable and part of a project, and so this is a good feeling to have about work.

A Q&A WITH ARIAN MOAYED

(Agent Cleary)

An agent in the Department of Damage Control with a mandate to track down superpowered individuals by any means necessary.

What were your initial thoughts when you first read the scripts for "Wonder Man"?
This rarely happens, but I got the scripts and I read all of them in one sitting. They all felt naturalistic and easy. The cool thing about "Wonder Man" is that it feels honest and real and of today. There were jokes and nuance, and stakes.

Agent Cleary first made appearances in "Spider-Man: No Way Home" and "Ms. Marvel." What was it like revisiting the character this time around?
Agent Cleary has always been about balancing what his job entails and the morality and ethics behind it. But one of the cool things about working on "Wonder Man" is that Agent Cleary has this new vibe and new energy. He's still got the gruffness and the hardness to him, but it's elevated a little bit, which is fun because we're getting to know more and more about him. We also get to see him work alongside characters like Trevor Slattery.

Speaking of Trevor, what was it like working with Ben Kingsley?
I remember doing our first scene together. It was a rehearsal in the car, and I was looking in his eyes, and obviously I knew all the lines and I was ready to go, and then he says his line and for a brief second I thought, "I am now acting with Ben Kingsley and he is now waiting for me to respond." And I guess some time had passed and the script supervisor fed me the line. [*Laughs.*] I knew the line, I was just getting over the fact that I was acting alongside Ben Kingsley—"Sexy Beast," "Gandhi" Ben Kingsley. It was a dream!

What do you think makes Yahya Abdul-Mateen II so great for his role as Simon Williams?
I had the privilege of first seeing Yahya on Broadway when he was doing "Topdog/Underdog." And then we were both nominated for Tony Awards® the same year, so we actually got to hang out during the nomination circuit, and the first thing that you notice about him is how unbelievably confident he is of who he is. The best actors I've had the privilege of working with all really understand who they are, for better or worse, meaning they understand their beautiful side and they understand the things that they're working on. When you work with someone like Yahya, you know that you're working with someone who's going to bring it every time. He's a brilliant actor who's playing an actor in the show who isn't brilliant, so you know that takes skill. [*Laughs.*] You can't just wing that.

Was it fun to lampoon and poke a little fun at the Hollywood side of things in this story?
In having a show like this that goes after the ins and outs of this industry, it was kind of amazing to play a character who can also stand in for the audience and be the person who's saying, "This is absurd." [*Laughs.*] And I love that about it. What's so amazing about "Wonder Man" and how it deals with the Hollywood system is that it actually feels very honest. It's so interesting to be in a Marvel series that lampoons and shows the truth behind what Hollywood actually is.

A Q&A WITH X MAYO
(Janelle Jackson)

Janelle Jackson is a talent agent known as a tenacious and loyal advocate for her clients. She is both Simon's champion and his friend, able to give him tough love when necessary.

What interested you in this project and joining the Marvel Cinematic Universe?

Well, I didn't know I was auditioning for Marvel at first because they're very under wraps, very CIA, very FBI. When my agents told me I got the part, I asked them if they confused me with their other Black client. [*Laughs.*] Even they didn't know. I said, "I wish I would've known, 'cause I would've worn a cape, I would've flown in on my self-tape." But that's exactly why they didn't tell me. The role was grounded, but comedic. I saw the humor in it, and if you've been paying attention to Marvel you'll know they love funny bits. I love this character and I love that this is kind of a discovery for a lot of people who don't know about "Wonder Man." So, I'm so excited to be a part of the cast that's going to help set up this moment in the MCU.

Did your experiences with your own agents help inform your character?
I've had amazing agents the whole time that I've had them. So, I drew on some of my experiences, but I also grabbed inspiration from anecdotes from experiences that friends have had. Janelle is a straight shooter. I think she has to be on her shit all the time and be at the top of her game because this agency is top tier and there's a lot of money at stake, so she cannot mess around. And I think she has to be a little tough, especially with Simon, whose career she's trying to get off the ground, but who's being a nuisance on set. She's finding these big opportunities for him because she believes in him, and I drew on that from my team. I know that they believe in me and I hope that it comes across that Janelle truly believes in Simon and his talent.

What was it like working with Yahya?
People probably don't know how he is when the cameras aren't rolling. He knew everybody's name, he checked on the PAs, he was always checking on me. When it was cold, he asked, "Do you need a jacket?" I saw those specific things and I remember thinking, "Oh, that's a *leader*." You can't fake that, and I think it'll be evident on screen, how much he cares and what a quality leader he is.

What did you enjoy most about this experience?
What I enjoyed the most was the little girl inside of me who dreamed about working in Hollywood, driving down these streets with my mom, looking at homes on our way to the Valley to see family and then all these years later, looking up at the Hollywood sign driving home or coming to set. I'm blessed, truly, to be able to work at this caliber, with this giant studio that has been so gracious, kind and accommodating. This experience was a phenomenal blessing.

What do you hope the fans connect to with this series?
I think the fans are going to connect to the comedy and the relationships. I think they're going to be invested in these characters and will want to see if these characters change, if they're capable of change, and how things play out over the course of eight episodes. Also, I'm biased because I was born and raised in L.A., but this is the most beautiful goddamn city, and shooting around this town was really fun. To do that as a kid from L.A.—shooting a TV series about Hollywood, in Hollywood—is a dream.

I LOVE L.A.

A Locations Guide to Wonder Man's Hollywood

"The intent, when we were initially pitching our vision for the production design to Marvel, was to pitch our own Hollywood story and how we got here. What were the local haunts we used to go to? Sadly, some spots don't exist anymore, but we still wanted to integrate them into our sets and make our *Hollywood feel alive in the show."*
—Cindy Chao, production designer and lifelong Angeleno

"It was incredible to film in L.A. The city has a history with the film and television industry that doesn't compare with any other place on Earth. Even in these times where everything feels so uncertain, working on this show was a nice reminder of why we got into this industry. L.A. isn't just a dream factory, it's a community—and there's no community like the film and TV community, no matter what part of town you're in."
—Michele Yu, production designer and Angeleno

EPISODE 1

Vasquez Rocks: The filming location of the original 1980s "Wonder Man" film. The Agua Dulce nature reserve also provided various alien-planet backdrops that were used throughout the "Star Trek" series dating from the 1960s to today.

Vidiots: The beloved Highland Park theater where Simon and his dad watch the original "Wonder Man." It's portrayed in the series as the "The Eagle" theater.

Simon's Apartment: A multi-unit dingbat apartment complex located on Lexington Avenue in Hollywood.

TCL Chinese Theatre/Hollywood Walk of Fame: The legendary theater Simon walks past while texting Trevor a photo of Von Kovak's star is also the site of the Mandarin's terrorist attacks in "Iron Man 3."

Highland Theatre: The now-closed Highland Park theater where Simon first meets Trevor at a matinee showing of "Midnight Cowboy."

Taix: The Silver Lake mainstay, established in 1927, is where Simon and Trevor go for a drink following their "Wonder Man" auditions.

EPISODE 2

Clark Street Diner: Trevor and Agent Cleary meet here to discuss the case. Formerly known as the 101 Coffee Shop, the jukebox diner is a Hollywood institution and previously appeared in the 1996 film "Swingers," and in episodes of "The Gilmore Girls" and "Entourage."

The Talmadge: Trevor's apartment building. An elegant but worse-for-wear pre-World War II structure located at the corner of Wilshire and Berendo in Koreatown. All interior and exterior shots were shot in

the building, which was built in 1924 as a gift from 20th Century Pictures founder Joseph Schenck to his silent-film-star wife, Norma Talmadge.

Joe Pantoliano's Beachfront House: This is a rental home on the Pacific Coast Highway. Joe Pantoliano lives on the east coast in real life.

EPISODE 3

Danny Trejo Mural: The mural dedicated to the man, the myth, the legend. Located on Van Nuys Boulevard and Tamarack Avenue in Pacoima.

Griffith Park: The overlook at the end of the episode was filmed on a fire road in L.A.'s famed Griffith Park.

EPISODE 4

Sound: The Hollywood nightclub that doubles for the Wilcox, the fictional club where DeMarr "Doorman" Davis works. It features a unique lighting grid that rises and lowers and refurbished wood paneling from one of Frank Sinatra's previous homes.

EPISODE 5

Power House Bar: A classic dive located on Highland Avenue in Hollywood, where Simon and Trevor share a drink to celebrate their callbacks.

Break Room 86: The club where Simon and Trevor follow Jaden and make a deal. The space has a number of excellent private karaoke rooms, which the production designers and Marvel executives ducked into on occasion to sing the full 10-minute version of Taylor Swift's "All Too Well."

EPISODE 6

Von Kovak's Prison of Opulence: A Beverly Hills mansion located within a gated estate atop Benedict Canyon Drive. The home is currently for sale for a cool $69.9 million.

EPISODE 7

Mother Wolf: The Italian restaurant where Simon and Trevor have dinner with Simon's agency team.

Paramount Studios backlot: The studio lot where the stage work for "Wonder Man" is being filmed.

EPISODE 8

Sowden House: A neo-Mayan mansion designed in 1926 by Lloyd Wright, famous for its distinct beauty and mystery. According to its website, "there are even suspicions that the house might hold the key to the notoriously unsolved Black Dahlia murder case of 1947."

Westwood Fox Village and Bruin theaters: Location of the premiere for "Wonder Man."

Fosters Freeze: A California fast-food chain where Simon and his dad talk about acting over burgers.

FUN BEHIND-THE-SCENES FACTS ABOUT THE MAKING OF "WONDER MAN"

- Production designers and L.A. natives Michele Yu and Cindy Chao are an Emmy®-nominated creative team who met while they were students at UC San Diego. They were both studying in different programs that didn't necessarily feed into the film and TV industry, but they both fell for the Hollywood dream and started their careers working on indie films with tiny budgets. Like Simon Williams, they're also both children of immigrant parents who support them but have no real idea what they do for a living. As a personal homage to this shared experience, Yu had a menu from her parents' old restaurant, Oodles Gourmet, replicated and placed in the kitchen of Simon's childhood home.

- Yu and Chao wanted to tell the story of Trevor through his apartment, and that meant including one very furry Easter egg. According to Chao, "We had to think about designing Trevor's apartment in terms of…who is this man who's lived such an interesting life and how do we reflect all those different eras?" Every object in his space tells some kind of backstory for an era of Trevor's life, from the little souvenirs he's kept from his party days to a footstool that was reworked to look like Morris, his furry companion in "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings."

- Among the many L.A. landmarks (both globally recognizable and hyper-local) included in Yu and Cho's initial pitch deck for the series was a photo of the "House of Davids." The house served as a curiosity for L.A. locals for years before the new owners got rid of the phalanx of Davids that lined the driveway. The kooky spirit of that house, however, served as inspiration for Von Kovak's mansion.

  "Hollywood brings out the weirdness in you when you've made it. So, what would an eccentric but very wealthy director have in their house? Cindy immediately said his living room would have a life-sized chess board and all of the pieces are rare chairs," says Yu. "This mansion reflects a person who operates on his whims. He goes by instinct and so his space needed to feel like it didn't have a master plan. The rooms are all very different from each other but everything feels like it came from one voice."

- [MILD SPOILER] Josh Gad went Method to play himself. According to Gad, "The pitch was: we want to introduce Josh Gad into the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I was hoping to play a superhero, but I play the next best thing, which is myself. I'm very Method, and so getting into Josh Gad's mind was something that took a little time, but the more I got to know him and live with his wife and kids, the more comfortable I felt with the idea of bringing this character to

life." Kidding aside, Gad was honored to be the first person to bring a beloved Disney song to the MCU. "I thought they would ask Pocahontas to do it first, so frankly I was glad to get the call and beat her to the punch."

- Cinematographer Brett Pawlak reteamed with his longtime collaborator and "Short Term 12" director Destin Daniel Cretton to establish the series' look and feel, which was meant to evoke a grounded, indie quality. The exception, of course, was episode 4 (which was shot by Armando Salas). It's the only episode that was allowed to break the visual rules. "Armando got to bring out every smoke machine and lighting device he ever wanted for that one," says co-creator Andrew Guest. "It's a bottle episode that's meant to be a Hollywood fable or a fairy tale. That was the vibe we were going for when it came to the rise and fall of DeMarr Doorman Davis."

- Jean Elie was brought on board to consult on the cultural specificities pertaining to Simon's family. In episode 3, a blue donation barrel for items intended for Haiti can be seen in Martha's living room—a must-have whenever social gatherings occur within the Haitian American community. Elie also appears as Simon's assistant in latter episodes.

- When deciding on what Wonder Man's superhero costume would look like, costume designer Joy Cretton notes that she "went back and forth between the red and the green look. There are so many comic-book styles that we could've gone into, and they definitely were our inspiration. But we ended up going with a dark black and red to keep it a little moody since Simon's an emotional character. We worked with an amazing concept artist as well that helped us to get to that place."

- Cretton kept the character costumes grounded in reality, but when it came to Trevor she kept his recent past in mind. "He's a collector of interesting things, and we knew he'd have this really eclectic closet, but he's also just returning from Ta Lo, the city in 'Shang-Chi,' so his look would be simpler, more Zen. The flashbacks show a cooler side."

- [MILD SPOILER] The series is filled with homages to the movies that everybody who worked on "Wonder Man" loves. In particular, the ending of Robert Altman's "The Player" provided inspiration for a moment in the finale. According to Andrew Guest, "'The Player' is one of the greatest movies ever made about Hollywood. In fact, Seth Rogen's boss in 'The Studio' is named after the main character in 'The Player.' But in that movie Richard E. Grant is pitching this movie that he wants to make with no-name stars because it's a really serious subject matter, and you watch him pitch it several times throughout the movie. At the very end, we're finally watching that movie on the big screen…and it stars Julia Roberts and Bruce Willis. That gag was the inspiration for the final scene in the 'Wonder Man' movie where we bring Joe Pantoliano back."